

of hate crimes in this way, including 62 percent who strongly favor it. Just 22 percent oppose this action, with 17 percent who strongly oppose it.

Support for hate crimes definition expansion is strong across the board. Large majorities of every major subgroup of the electorate—including such traditionally conservative groups as Republican men (56 percent) and evangelical Christians (63 percent)—express support for this proposal. Support also crosses racial lines, with three in four whites (74 percent), African Americans (74 percent), and Latinos (72 percent) favoring Congress's including sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of hate crimes.

Voters believe strongly in government's obligation to protect all citizens, the fact that crimes based on prejudice are directed against an entire community, and that it would give local law enforcement extra help in solving crimes.

Voters soundly reject arguments against this proposal. Whether it is the idea that it creates unequal treatment under the law; that it attacks the moral and religious beliefs of those opposed to homosexuality; or that it equates being gay with being Black or a woman, arguments against the hate crimes bill are not compelling to the public.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, by passing H.R. 1592 we also pay fitting tribute to David Ray Ritcheson of Spring, Texas, my constituent, friend, and a very courageous young man. David Ray, a victim of one of the most horrible hate crimes in Harris County, Texas came forward to tell his story to the Crime Subcommittee in the hopes of saving others from experiencing a similar brutal ordeal. In coming forward, he has performed a valuable service to our Nation. In going forward with H.R. 1592 and seeing it through to final passage, this Committee is also performing a great service to our Nation by hastening the day when we make hate history.

In conclusion, let me say that I strongly support H.R. 1592 and will vote to report the bill favorably to the full Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 1 minute to JAN SCHAKOWSKY of Illinois.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I thank the gentleman.

I am so proud to stand here against hate, but even more, I feel compelled to stand here against violence.

When the categories of people that are named in this bill were picked, it wasn't sort of a capricious or random or even a liberal bias sort of thing, that we want to support certain people or single them out. It is because the statistics show us and the law enforcement community who supports this bill has said, these are the victims of violence. They are named for only one reason and that's it. And we are talking about people who are victims of assault, of brutal attacks, of torture, or even of murder.

You can say it as many times as you want. This is not about thought. This is not about speech. This is about violence. And you or your pastor may not agree with homosexuals or transgenders, but surely you don't

think that is a reason for them to be assaulted.

Support the bill.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my colleagues. We have twice as many requests for time than we have the time.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield 30 seconds to the brilliant gentlelady from Oakland, California, BARBARA LEE.

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank Congresswoman BALDWIN and Congressman BARNEY FRANK for making sure we have a chance to vote on this very important legislation today. And I just want to briefly tell you a story, if I can, very quickly.

There was a young lady next to my district named Gwen Araujo. She was viciously beaten to death and buried, again, by four men, simply because she was born a male. Gwen was comfortable as herself, as a transgendered woman who had gone through most of high school as a girl and had the love and support of her family, particularly her mother, Sylvia Guerrero.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say there are so many stories of countless people who are dead, countless people who get killed because of their God-given right that they were living to be themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1592, and I am pleased that today, we can have a vote on the legislation that I know many of us have in this chamber. Chairman CONYERS, Congresswoman BALDWIN, and Congressman FRANK.

This legislation is long overdue. In the history of this Nation, there is a dark chapter. That chapter is full traumatic scenes of people being murdered, beaten, attacked, raped, harassed, and threatened because something about them was different from their aggressors. Whether it has been the color of their skin, their religion, their gender, their disability, National origin, or their sexual orientation or identity the sad fact is that so many in this country have suffered violence, often ending in death, because of one of these reasons.

Sadly, many of the recent attacks based on sexual orientation have been on black gay men. One of those stories happened in New York this past October, when a young man named Michael Sandy, was beaten by four men who set him up, just so they could beat and rob him. He ended up in a coma for several days, before finally succumbing to his injuries. In court proceedings, it was revealed that his attackers would often seek out gay men to steal from and attack. Fortunately, New York has a Hate Crimes law that includes sexual orientation.

Many hate groups have also used the debate on immigration to amp up their hate speech, and violence, promoting hate crimes against Mexican-Americans and other Latinos. In Houston, TX, David Ritcheson, a 16 year-old Mexican-American high school football team member was viciously and savagely beaten by two young skinheads. They poured bleach on him, and sodomized him, leaving him a coma, with massive internal injuries and now deaf in one ear.

And closer to home, right outside my district in Newark, CA, a young woman in high school, named Gwen Araujo, was viciously beaten to death and buried, again, by four young men, simply because she was born a male. Gwen was comfortable as herself, a transgendered woman, who had gone through most of high school as a girl, and had the love and support of her family, particularly her mother, Sylvia Guerrero.

Her story resonates with me because in my time in the California Legislature, I championed the California School Hate Crimes Reduction Act. I did so because our children needed to feel safe in their schools. I was determined to include sexual orientation in that bill. Doing so made passing that legislation an uphill battle, even leading to a veto by Governor Pete Wilson. Nonetheless, we were finally able to pass the California School Hate Crimes Act of 1995, thanks to the assistance of our former Republican colleague, Congressman Tom Campbell who was then serving with me in the California Legislature. During that period, I learned just how deep-seated the hate against people who were gay or transgendered, black or latino, or otherwise somehow different, still is today and that is why we need to pass H.R. 1592 today.

Mr. Speaker, these stories are just a small glimpse of the vicious crimes going on out there. We must pass this legislation today, in the memory of Michael Sandy, Gwen Araujo, and countless others who are now dead, simply because they were themselves. People have a God given right to be themselves and as law makers we must protect everyone from violence based on hate. As an African-American woman who has faced so much hatred and so much discrimination in my life I implore you today to remember the words of Dr. M.L. King, Jr. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to yield 1 minute to the majority leader, Mr. HOYER.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, this will be one of the serious votes that we cast during this session. This will be a vote on whether or not we are going to allow bigotry to manifest itself in hate and result in violence.

My friend, Artur Davis, rose and he said he didn't know anybody of faith who recommended violence. I would suggest that tragically the citizens of the United States know all too well some who claim to be men of faith and who have issued fatwas to kill those not of their faith, and that if they do so, Allah will reward them. We call them terrorists. They kill not because of individual wrongdoing or individual action. They kill because of the membership in a faith or a race or a nationality, because perhaps we are Christian or we are Jews or we are Americans. And we call them terrorists.

This is an important vote. Neither the exercise of bigotry nor the rationalization of bigotry ought to be sanctioned in this great House, but we know through the centuries it has been. We know there were those who in times past rose on this floor and rationalized slavery and rationalized why we should not have antilynching laws in America. We know that. We lament it, and we say to ourselves had we